HARAMBEE

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In This Issue:

EDITORIAL: A Need For Fantasies; FROM OTHER SOURCES: Sentencing of Policepersons Seen As Political Reprisal, War On Drugs: Czars And Middle-Men, African Invention In U.S. On Exhibit, West's Toxic Waste In Africa, Nigeria Hosts Meeting On Traditional Medicines, Etc.; POETRY: Conversation With My Slumlord.

A Need For Fantasies

In African communities throughout the U.S., there are primary schools, middle schools, and colleges and universities named after folks such as Imhotep, Malcolm X, Queen Nzinga, Harriet Tubman, Cinque, Patrice Lumumba. In these institutions, students are studying pan-African literature--the works of people such as Toni Morrison, Langston Hughes, Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, Sonia Sanchez, et al. Students are learning appreciation of African music traditions from around the world, are being exposed to the genius of the masters of African-American Clasical Music(so-called "jazz")--Charlie Parker, Lady Day, John Coltrane, Mary Lou Williams, Duke Ellington, and others. Students are learning African languages--San Kiswahili, Hausa, etc. Students are studying pan-African history, cultures, and traditional African values and perceptions. These schools exist in most African communities and are run independently of typically Caucasian-controlled school districts. And they are turning out boys and girls and young men and women who have a strong sense of pride and dignity in themselves and in African people in general.

In African communities throughout the U.S., African people are going to churches in which there are no invented Caucasian Jesuses staring down at them from crosses; in which they are not being told to peacefully accept oppression and wait until after death to pass through pearlie gates and walk upon streets paved with gold before they can get salvation; in which the most significant part of the church service, as far as the preacher is concerned, is not the passing of the collection plate. African folks are attending churches in which religion is perceived as being an integral part of every-day life, as being part of breathing, eating, working, playing, and loving; in which the spirit of the great invisible mother and father is seen as existing in every creature, animate and in-

animate, in the natural world; in which our gallery of saints is comprised of people who look like us, who lived for us, who worked on our behalf, and who sacrificed their lives for our needs and aspirations.

In African communities throughout the U.S., it is a rare thing to see or hear African people who are ashamed of their physical African features; it is the rule rather than the exception to see African people clothed in a fashion connected directly, or by adaptation, to traditional African dress; it is generally the case that African people hold integrity and collective self-love above individual self-interest and are moved to act by a communalistic spirit, not by individualism and competitiveness; it is extremely unusual to find African people rejecting each other as mates in favor of Caucasians; it is uncommon to find Africans abusing each other for money because we have established our own institutions by which Africans are employed and because such abuse is looked upon by our communities as an abomination.

In African communities throughout the U.S., we find our people listening to radio programs and watching television fare produced by African people and designed to enlighten, inform, and stimulate us, not fatten us up emotionally and psychologically for commercial huckstering; we find theatres and auditoria where African and African-American plays, dances, music, etc. are regularly performed and always well-attended; we find creativity abounding.

All the above, of course, is essentially a fantasy. But how does something which is not a reality become one if not through fantasy? There is an old reality. A person(s) conceives a fantasy/vision and works toward the actualization of that fantasy. It is through this process that a new reality comes into being. The present reality of African

life in America is a veritable handwriting on the wall, spelling "deep trouble." Many of the African folks in the middle and upper-middle classes, being, in varying degrees, materially prosperous, have established for themselves a fantasy in which those millions of Africans at the bottom of the economic heap either do not exist or are of some separate breed and, thus, do not count. In their fantasy world, there is no need for such things as reclamation of African values; identification with one's African heritage; developing independent political, economic, and other institutions; etc. because things are fine just as they are.

In large urban areas, many African people - particularly, boys and young men - having taken on the cynicism of materialistic America and having seen the stark contradiction between freakish wealth on one hand and a dearth of economic opportunities on the other, have simply decided that they're going to get theirs, whatever the risks to the lives of people around them or to their own lives. Numbers of these boys and young men follow the lure of a fantasy(vintage Hollywood) in which there are car chases, shoot-outs/drive-bys, and other facets of an action adventure. But, as Richard Pryor says, when you get shot in real life, there is no soundtrack. And, as is also true, there are no stunt men.

Yes, there is handwriting on the wall. But some of us, our "responsible leadership," instead of interpreting that writing and moving creatively and courageously to seek real resolution to the problems which the handwriting is symbolic of, are singing the praises of detergents or wall-paper. But it is not detergents or wall-paper we need. We need African-centered fantasies/visions and the determination to bring those fantasies to fruition.

Back in April, the African-American Summit was held in New Orleans. It was supposed to give birth to some kind of blueprint for constructive

change. But according to reports from a wide range of publications, no consensus was reached on any concrete plan.

There is a need for an African summit in America. There is a need for a summit whose participants are not so afraid of the Caucasian-run political and economic power-structures that they are constrained from thinking imaginatively, from thinking from an Afrocentric perspective, from charting an independent/self-reliant African course in America. There is a need for a summit whose participants are ready to develop a plan of action by which we can deal with our problems on our own.

One factor which has made the convening of significant and Afrocentric summit is the refusal of many among our so-called "intelligensia" to face the seriousness of the collective African reality in America. These men and women know that there are several million African people who have no realistic prospect for an even moderately prosperous future and that the U.S. government has no plans for improving their prospects. On some level or other, these members of the "intelligensia" suspect that these millions of poor African folks are, as far as the U.S. government is concerned, expendable. The implications of there being a large segment of a population feeling increasingly hopeless and/or angry, of a government seeing this segment as being expendable, and of that government having the means to remove the expendable segment are ominous. And such ominous implications threaten an illusion on the part of our "responsible leadership" that America is our friend and that its supposed and dormant goodness can be relied upon.

When we begin to look at the American reality clearly, we will see how desperately we need a new set of fantasies by which a new reality can be established. It is the job of our visionaries to to bring their visions to the rest of us and to do so now, while there MAY be still time.

FLAME Editorial Policy

The HARAMBEE FLAME, the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization (parent chapter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, Inc.) is a pan-Africanist newsletter. The FLAME's priority, with respect to news and views, is African people, events and developments which affect us and are, or should be, of concern to us. The FLAME does not recognize any distinction between African people based solely on place of birth. References in the FLAME to African people are made on the basis of our common ancestry. An exception to this is the reprinting of articles, or excerpts thereof, from other publications, in which cases we do not alter "black" or other terms used to designate African people. This is our practice because we do not wish to diminish the integrity and authenticity of the articles we excerpt from.

Articles contained in the FLAME do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization unless they are accompanied by a statement identifying the views as being those of the organization. Generally speaking, all unsigned articles are by the editor, Wopashitwe Mondo Fyen we Lanca (aka David Rice).

We encourage you to submit articles to the FLAME. Please enclose with your submission a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should not exceed 900 words, though longer pieces will not be automatically rejected. Short stories are subject to the same restriction with respect to length. We also welcome poetry and graphics. We are looking for poems which address African folks' lives, the conditions we face, and our struggles to rise above those things which hinder us. We are <u>not</u> looking for poems which sacrifice power and beauty for the sake of uniform rhythm and/or rhyme. Send submissions to the editor c/o HARAMBEE FLAME.

From Other Sources

Sentencing Of Two African Former Policepersons

Viewed As Political Reprisal

"Theresa Jeffery-Clark and John Clark, two Black former members of the Oakland Police Department (OPD) well known for their efforts to reform the force, were sentenced to three years in prison May 11. They were convicted of perjury based on a 1980 deposition the Clarks refused to sign, which says they admitted to fraudulently using a paid sick day in 1983. The usual sentence for such crimes is probation.

"The presiding judge later modified their sentence, placing them instead under house arrest. The Clarks will be made to wear electronic monitoring devices on their bodies so that their movements can be monitored by a U.S. Marshal; they will not be able to leave their house at night except to go grocery shopping. They are to pay for their own surveillance, which involves wiring their entire house, along with $13,000 in prosecution expenses, and do 150 hours of community service. The judge also ordered them to pay for a public confession which he wrote for publication in the Oakland Tribune.

"Local activists believe the conviction and sentence represent judicial vindictiveness for the Clarks' efforts to expose racism and corruption in the OPD.

"The Clarks joined Oakland Black Police Officers Association in 1980 and helped organize a progressive caucus within the association, the Black Officers Task Force. Their task force's goal was to end police abuse within the Black community. The group publicized the illegal use of quotas to increase arrests in Black neighborhoods

and opposed biased reporting by white superiors in promotion, retention and conduct reports...

"In 1983, the Clarks and other task force members filed a suit against the department with the state Equal Employment Opportunities Commission(EEOC). The suit, filed on behalf of Oakland's Black community, was upheld in a 1984 decision that found the department was using racially discriminatory quotas.

"In 1984, the couple, along with other Black officers, participated in a series of television news specials on police abuse...

"They soon came under severe criticism within the department and were placed under constant surveillance, given negative competency ratings and isolated from other Black officers. Their discrimination suit against the department was eventually dismissed on a legal technicality and they were fired..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Whistle-blowing Cops Whopped For Exposing Police Racism," which appears on page 5 of the June 14 THE GUARDIAN(N.Y., N.Y.).

War On Drugs: Czars And Middle-Men

"Listening to the media one would come to believe cocaine was manufactured in the ghetto. It grew there. Same thing with heroin. Afterall, the busts, killing and dealing went on in the ghetto. Blacks have about become synonymous to crack. When white America thinks of crack, they think of Blacks automatically. And you can look all day long in the ghetto and not see any signs of the $100+ billion allegedly made off drugs, primarily cocaine...

"The ghetto's being pimped, the gangs are being

pimped, our kids are being pimped. The Black community is being pimped by big-buck drug czars of whom you will find no Blacks. The people at the top of this $100+ billion 'industry' are not black. Cocaine flows into the ghetto and the cash it generates flows out, leaving broken families, high crime, gangs, killings and more poverty in its departure...

"Prisons are so overcrowded prisoners are being kept on floating barges. Bennett is now advocating that military prisons are 'ideal' for drug dealers. And what drug dealers is Bennett referring to? You got it: primarily Black drug dealers like those in Washington, D.C., the victims of cocaine...our prisons are rapidly becoming concentration camps, the possibility of using military prisons to hold drug 'victims' should be ringing our bell: danger ahead!...

"With the amount of drugs coming into this country by the tons, it's obvious the only war on drugs is the war against victims of the drugs. There basically isn't a war of interdiction because regardless of tons of cocaine confiscated from planes, barges and boats each year there's more dope than ever. There is talk but very little action in the government busting money-laundering operations handling the $100+ billion a year made from drugs sold in America. Federal agents 'Operation Polar Cap' recently charged twenty-nine defendants with drug and currency violations in the U.S., Columbia and Panama. The group is supposedly a major U.S. money-laundering operation for the infamous 'Columbian Medellin Cocaine Cartel'. A Columbian bank and its Panamanian subsidiary were indicted on charges of conspiring on the shipment of more than $1 billion in U.S. drug proceeds to bank accounts controlled by the Cartel. A key defendant has escaped capture in Panama and is feared to be aided by Manuel Noriega, Panamanian strongman indicted on federal drug charges in Florida.

..."Most American drug czars pay cash for their

product to get discounts on quantity. Drugs fronted usually cost more, and there is a lot fronted in this industry. Regardless, if it's cash or 'on the cuff', around and around goes multi-billions of dollars of cash, lining everyone's pockets but the pockets in the ghetto...Drug money flowing through Los Angeles banks has produced a $3 billion cash surplus at the City's Federal Reserve Bank, a 2,200% jump since 1985.

"It is not surprising the rise of gangs on the west coast coincides with the shift of drug trafficking from Miami to Los Angeles via Mexico. Los Angeles gangs have chapters in a phenomenal number of cities and states, but none in Florida. The traditional capital of the drug trade, Florida, even though Miami saw its Federal Reserve Cash surplus decline from $6 billion in 1985 to $4.8 billion last year, doesn't need the gangs the way the west coast does in opening new markets. The American drug czars open new markets and the gangs catch all the heat as the czars laugh all the way to the money-laundering banks..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Growing Up In America," which appears on pages 30 and 31 of the spring-summer BLIND LADY QUARTERLY(Littleton, CO)

African Invention In America On Exhibit

"Three hundred and eleven years of Black history went on display here(in Washington, D.C.) on May 14 at the Smithsonian Anacostia Museum.

"Entitled 'The Real McCoy: African American Invention and Innovation, 1619 to 1930', the exhibit examines the impact of contributions of Blacks to American technology...

"The works of 42 inventors are on display, ranging from Elijah 'The Real' McCoy's locomotive lubrica-

ting device to Garrett Morgan's stop-go traffic signal and gas mask...

"She(exhibit curator, Portia James) explained that the banjo and xylophone are examples of musical contributions from Africa as well as the use of herbal medicines in the health area...

"Beyond the outright theft of Black inventions by whites, Ms. James said obstacles she faced in her three year effort to collect the items and facts included the inaccessibility of items and the relying of documents not prepared by Blacks...

"Other problems Ms. James identified were that early patent offices did not identify the race of the inventor. And in 1858 the Attorney General ruled that slaves could not apply for a patent as the result of one slave owner claiming ownership to the slave's invention by virtue of his ownership of the slave, Ms. James said..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Museum Opens View Of Black Achievement," which appears on page 4 of the June 11 THE FINAL CALL(Chicago, ILL).

West's Waste Industry Looks To Africa For Profits

"A scheme for dumping 2000 tons a day of toxic waste from Europe and the U.S. into the Moroccan Sahara is the latest incident in a growing practice many third world countries term 'toxic terrorism'...

"There was a hint of the profits involved in the disposal of hazardous waste in last month's revelations about a secret plan by a British-backed consortium to build the world's largest toxic waste disposal plant in Morocco. The information leaked to the British Guardian told of a deal by the consortium, Midco, to put $180 million into

the project over the next four years, with expected profits of $240 million a year after five years.

"Under the scheme, Midco plans to export 2000 tons of toxic waste a day to Tarfara, Morocco, from Western countries and burn it to produce electricity and other products.

"A Canadian employe of the consortium, Claude Cornet, went public with his doubts about Midco's expertise in the field, claiming the potential for disaster is high. The Sahara is a fragile environment with a large freshwater reservoir underneath. 'It would be tragic', said Cornet, 'if that water supply were contaminated'.

"According to the newspaper account, the consortium told Morocco's King Hassan that the plan would help industrialize Morocco, but failed to tell him the waste was toxic...

..."Western companies find it cheaper and more politically expedient to export hazardous waste to the third world than to dispose of it in their own countries.

"A Greenpeace study on toxic waste indicates Wes-

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tern companies are currently offering African countries $40 per ton of toxic material. Dumping such waste in Europe or the U.S. may cost between $160 and $1000 per ton..."

-Above passages excerpted from "West Uses Africa As Toxic Waste Dump," which appears on pag-

es 22 and 21 of the June 14 THE GUARDIAN(N.Y., N.Y.).

Nigeria To Host Meeting On Traditional Medicines

"A sub-committee of the OAU(Organization for African Unity) Scientific and Technical Research Commission is to decide the locations of future African pharmaceutical laboratories. The decision will be taken after the completion of a market study funded by the UN Industrial Development Organisation at a cost of $130,000.

"Nigeria is to host a meeting on July 26 where scientists from seven African countries will discuss a study of plants used by traditional practitioners but unknown to modern medical science. The commission hopes that it will be possible to manufacture and sell these remedies both in Africa and abroad."

-Above passages excerpted from "Medicine Ancient And Modern," which appears on pages 980 and 981 of the June 12-18 WEST AFRICA(London, Eng.).

African Fashion Hits England

"'Africa' is the name of the exhibition opening June 14 for six weeks at Joss Graham's shop... London...

"Joss Graham plans to go on stocking African goods after the introductory exhibition because the customers on his 2,500-strong mailing list have been badgering him for years to mount an African exhibition...

"This timely exhibition also mirrors a growing response to African music. The same kind of driving rhythms, up-lifting beat, that same sense of free-

dom, are inherent in the textiles, and elicit a parallel feeling of relief. Life in the West has become so complex, rushed and stressful, that people find the relaxing rhythms, hand-made quality, natural colors and fabrics of African textiles harmonious and restful, as well as being dynamic--and new. The music and the art contain both polarities, just as the underlying philosophies of African cultures and religions indicate a balancing act of dynamic equilibrium...

"Part of the appeal of the African colour sense is that the spectrum was formerly completely derived from vegetable dyes and, of course, produced on natural rather than man-made fabrics...And now that governments like Nigeria have placed a ban on the import of fabrics, traditional ones like Adire are enjoying a huge renaissance in local fashion...

"Ethnic fashion is so popular nowadays because it is real, it speaks of integrated, deep cultures that have the power to sustain peoples in times of change. Perhaps the exhibition 'Africa' will encourage people to travel to the continent and look deeper into the societies that have produced these highly fashionable 'real things.'"

-Above passages excerpted from "The Ethnic Ethos," which appears on page 924 of the June 5-11 WEST AFRICA(London, Eng.).

Conversation With My Slumlord

Mister Landlord, my house needs screen doors,
Can't be keepin flies out with my hand no more.

Mister Landlord, my house needs a new fence,
The one we have now is rusted and bent.

Mister Landlord, my house needs
some new front stairs,
The mailman didn't know the hole was there.

And Oh Mister Landlord, all the windows need fixin,
Tried to cover the cracks but the panes
are still missin.

Mister Landlord, the bathtub still needs
a faucet and drain,
Can't take no bath 'less it happens to rain.

So don't you be calling bout no rent
Cause that money of yours is already spent!

-Dorothy Walker is a mother and factory worker living in Omaha.

Back In Time

"The Observer has our thanks for the compliment tendered in respect to our thinking faculties, notwithstanding our demented condition when we understand God to be a Negro. We have as much right Biblically and otherwise to believe that God is a Negro, as you Buchra or white people have to believe that God is a fine looking, symmetrical and ornamented white man. For the bulk of you and all the fool Negroes of the country believe that God is white-skinned, blue-eyed, straight-haired, projecting nosed, compressed lipped and finely robed white gentleman, sitting upon a throne somewhere in the heavens. Every race of people since time began who have attempted to describe their God by words, or by paintings, or by carvings, or by any other form or figure, have conveyed the idea that the God who made them and shaped their destinies was symbolized in themselves, and why should not the Negro believe that he resembles God as much so as other people? We do not believe that there is any hope for a race of people who do not believe they look like God.

"Demented though we be, whenever we reach the conclusion that God, or even that Jesus Christ, while in the flesh, was a white man, we shall hang our gospel trumpet upon the willow and cease to preach.

"...as long as we remain among the whites, the Negro will believe that the devil is black and that he(the Negro) favors the devil, and that God is white and that he(the Negro) bears no resemblance to him, and the effects of such a sentiment is contemptuous and degrading, and one-half of the Negro race will be trying to get white and the other half will spend their days in trying to be white men's scullions in order to please the whites..." -from a Feb. 1, 1893 article by Bishop Henry M. Turner of the African Methodist Church; source: BLACK NATIONALISM IN AMERICA by Bracey, Meier, and Rudwick.

Announcements

On July 15 the Mafundi Lake Defense Committee and the Birmingham Committee for Prisoner Support will be hosting a political event in Birmingham, Alabama in commemoration of the birthday of the imprisoned Nelson Mandela...The event will occur under the slogan of "Mandelas In America" and focus on the plight of African prisoners of war and political prisoners on the U.S. front of the African Liberation Movement...Letters of support and intent to participate in the Birmingham event should also be sent to: Birmingham Committee for Prisoner Support, P.O. Box 12152, Birmingham, AL 35202.

"Stop the U.S. War Against the Black Community" is the theme of the upcoming Conference Against Racism being put on by the Uhuru Solidarity Committee on Saturday and Sunday, July 8 and 9. To be held at the Fellowship Hall of the Trinity United Methodist Church in Berkeley, the conference will focus on the specific reality of the all-out counterinsurgency war being waged by U.S. government against African people in the form of chemical warfare through drugs, and the "war on drugs," which itself covers for martial law and military occupation of black communities...For more information, write the Uhuru Solidarity Center, 2706 Park Blvd., Oakland, CA 94606, or call (415)839-2306.

Conference On Racism In The Workplace

I attended the Labor Notes Conference, "New Directions," in Detroit, Michigan, which was held from the 19th through 21st of April. About 1,000 union activists from all over the U.S.A., Canada, Korea, Philippines, South Africa, the West Bank/Gaza Strip, and from Europe and Brazil attended. Fighting racism on the shop floor and within the unions was a very major topic at the conference.

Many Sisters and Brothers, not only shared different experiences, but suggested ways of confronting the actual practice of racism among fellow union members. Excellent conference. Since most of us are working people, the labor movement is vital to us all.

-L.J. Kelly

L.J. Kelly is an American-born African labor organizer in New York and works as a probation officer. He and others have formed the United Probation Officers Association in order to bring participatory democracy to the union.

We welcome letters, articles, and so forth. Send your submissions to: KARAMBEE FLAME
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